

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett  
*County Executive*

March 5, 2009

The Honorable Joseph F. Vallario, Jr.  
Chairman, Judiciary Committee  
6 Bladen Street  
House Office Building, Room 101  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1912

Re: HB 1217 - Vehicle Laws - Mandatory Use of Ignition Interlock System

Dear Chairman Vallario:

I am writing to you today not as Montgomery County Executive but, perhaps more importantly, as an individual who just this past weekend survived a very close call in an automobile collision.

My wife and I were hit by a repeat drunk driver – a man who allegedly ignored the conditions of his probation and jeopardized the public safety by making the decision to drink and drive again. We do not know how many times he has made the decision to drive under these conditions since his sentencing in August of 2008. Had this driver's sentence included the use of an Ignition Interlock device, I would perhaps not be writing you this letter today because the crash that I experienced may not have occurred.

Ignition interlocks are breathalyzer devices that are wired into a vehicle's ignition system. To start the vehicle, the convicted offender has to provide a sober breath sample by blowing into the interlock device. Interlock technology has come a long way since their initial development in the early 1970s. Interlocks are highly accurate, reducing repeat drunk driving offenses by 65 percent with circumvention protections in place to prevent cheating.

A 2008 AAA poll showed the public is strongly in favor of mandating ignition interlocks for convicted drunk drivers. A Public Opinion Strategy survey in 2006 also showed an 85 percent approval rate for interlocks for repeat offenders, and 65 percent approval of their use for first-time offenders. Even 82 percent of offenders believe interlocks are effective and fair.



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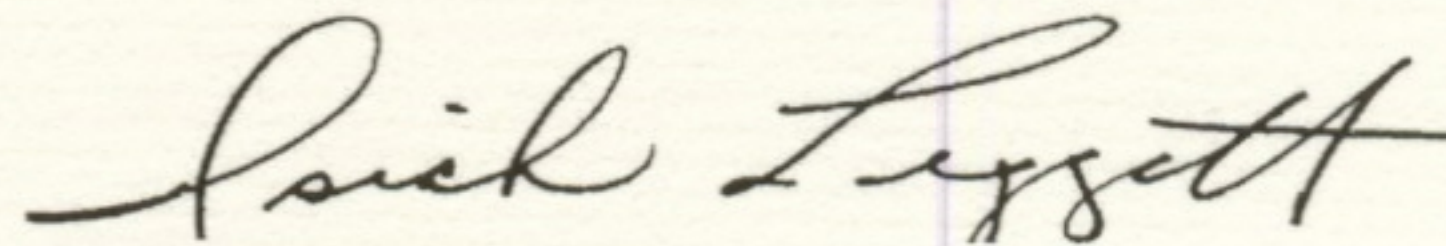
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The common misconception is that "first-time" drunk drivers have made a one time mistake. That is far from the reality. Research conducted by the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration shows that first-time offenders on average have driven drunk *87 times* before their first arrest.

Ignition interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers is a vital piece of MADD's *Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving*, which also calls for highly visible law enforcement efforts, the development of advanced vehicle technology to prevent a vehicle from being driven by anyone who is impaired and enlistment of community support. I believe in MADD's mission and envision a day in the near future when drunk driving is eliminated for good.

I urge you to support HB 1217. Mandatory interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers in Maryland can help reduce the risk to public safety from drunk drivers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Isiah Leggett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Isiah" and last name "Leggett" clearly distinguishable.

Isiah Leggett  
County Executive

IL/pl

cc: Members, House Judiciary Committee